

## **THE GENEALOGY OF MODERATE ISLAM IN THE SASAK PEOPLE'S RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

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**Abstract:** *Tracing the root of moderate Islam within the Sasak people's practices of life is the main concern of this article. It is factually seen that the Sasak people of Lombok, East Indonesia, practice all values of moderate Islam such as tolerance, balance, fairness, nationalism, and denying violence in the name of religion as an inseparable part of their lives. They practice Islam and tradition in the same breath-taking transcending any obstacles in their historical trajectory. This tenacious attitude, this article argues, is rooted in two points of Lombok people's religious experiences: compatibility of their ancestor's belief system and the extraordinary roles of Tuan Guru as the true driver of Sasak people's minds and movements to stay permanently in the gold middle path of religious understanding and practice.*

**Keywords:** *Genealogy; Moderate Islam; Sasak People; Religious Experience*

### **Introduction**

September 11, 2001, was a turning point in the issue of terrorism versus moderate Islam. Soon after the world trade center of New York of The United State of America was attacked, George W. Bush Jr. as the President of the USA launched a war on "terrorism". Afghanistan, Iraq, and the middle east, in general, were the battleground of that war. The most blamed part of the war was so-called Islamists; persons, groups, or states that adopt violence or terror in their way to gain their objectives.

It has to be acknowledged that the war has a strong-wide impact on the multidimensional life of whole world citizens, especially Muslims. In many parts of the world, Islam has been misperceived as a religion of violence, intolerant, and adopting terror in its teachings and practices. It has strong consequences on the issues of security, human right, international law, cooperation, governance, public policy, and public opinion as well. The situation has been challenging the Muslim world to prove that Islam has no ties with such acts of violence and terrors.

This is the contemporary origin of the rise of moderate Islam either on the level of concept or movement. The discourse has been fastly emerging across the globe from debating moderate Islam theologically and geopolitically within the American context to the strong support of Al-Azhar presidency of Egypt to the spreading of moderate Islam around the world to the philosophy of moderation in Islam and its movement especially in the Malay world as promoted by Kamal Hassan to the institutionalization of moderation in understanding and practicing religion as adopted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of The Republic of Indonesia.

Strengthening moderate Islam is now becoming a super-priority program of religious ministry and a top list topic of academicians researches in Indonesia. The common framework of research under the Ministry of Religious Affairs named ARKAN (Agenda Riset Keagamaan Nasional) 2018-2028 stated that the basis of the research should be the integration of knowledge and moderation of religious understanding to make Indonesia the global destination of Islamic studies. This strategic policy has been driving researches of Indonesian academicians or researchers to move in the wide range of moderate Islam. The browsing machine Google for example shows that there are 4.410.000 results with the keywords “moderate Islam” and “Indonesia”.

Mapping the discourse of moderate Islam in Indonesia, three big domains deal with the issue: state, civil society, and ethnic-cultural entity. State with all of its apparatus pretends to regulate citizen’s daily life and foreign policy based on principles or basic values of moderation. Meanwhile, civil society bodies such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, pesantren, and others have a long track as anchors of society in guarding the understanding and practices of moderate Islam. At the last, moderation of multiethnic-cultural entities rooted in the body of every ethnic and cultural entity as expressed in the faiths and local wisdom across the archipelago.

This is the focal point of this article. Moderate Islam in the context of the Sasak people of Lombok West Nusa Tenggara has been studied from different perspectives, approaches, and details. It is commonly accepted that religious traditions practiced by Sasak people are in line with moderate Islam. Asnawi and Jamaluddin –from historical studies-- rejected stereotyping of Sasak people as adherents of peripheral and unaccomplished Islam. All basic values of moderate Islam like tolerance, justice, balance, and dialogue are easily found in Lombok Sasak Muslim’s daily life. Sasak Muslim people are living in harmony and co-existence with the followers of other religions especially Hindus by canalizing and institutionalizing potential conflict in a very peaceful manner and tradition. Last but not least, Tuan Guru has been playing a great role in spreading, preaching, and flourishing moderate Islam into Sasak people along with their history.

What has not been said yet in these researches is how Sasak people got such compatibility with moderate Islam and readiness to accept its main values. At what kind of formation, they lived a religious experience with such conformity with moderate Islam? Why have Sasak people succeeded in guarding the essence of moderate Islam in the dynamic of dealing with different outsider powers? How to describe the genealogy of moderate Islam in Sasak people’s religious experience? These are some research questions where the novelty of this article lay in.

This article then aims to describe the genealogy of moderate Islam in the Sasak people’s religious experience. It means that when the previous researchers found that all basic values of moderate Islam are immanent in the Sasak people’s religious expressions, there had been a long process of historical and religious dynamics happening in their religious experimentation.

As a theoretical framework, this article will much refer to Hassan Hanafi, especially to his book entitled “Al-Huwiyyah” in analyzing and giving a philosophical explanation of the layers of Sasak people’s identity. It will also refer to Mohamed Abed Al-Jabiri, especially to his book entitled “Takwin al-Aql al-Arabi” to formulate an alternative narration of the Sasak people’s history based on their rich oral tradition of them and the inside perspective of Sasak native intellectuals. Related research on the topic of moderate Islam and Muslim Sasak which are published in journal articles, theses, dissertations, etc also will be referred to as a supporting analytical framework.

## **Method**

Seeking an in-depth understanding of the Sasak people’s religious experience in its natural setting is the nature of this research. So, the appropriate research approach to be used is a qualitative approach to answer the “why” aspect of Sasak people’s religious experience in its interaction with moderate Islam values. Data collection will be made through interviews with some experts on Sasak-Lombok history, culture, and religion; direct observation of the Sasak people’s characters especially in expressing religious understanding and practices; and studying of relevant documents (books, journal articles, and other printed documents) correlated with the subject of research. Meanwhile, a mix of historical and phenomenological paradigms will be used in analyzing the results of the research. The historical paradigm will be used to find out the genealogy of the Sasak people’s religious experience and the phenomenological paradigm will be used to interpret the moderation in the experience within the perspective of the writer as an insider among Sasak natives with the claim of intersubjectivity in the area of phenomenology studies.

## **Discussion**

### **The Religion of Sasak People’s Ancestors**

The religion of the Sasak people’s ancestors refers to the meaning of the word “Sasak” itself. In the Sasak language, “Sasak” originated from saq-saq which means “the one”. This “the one” signifies The Only God that the ancestors of the Sasak people believe in. Furthermore, the use of the word “Sasak” is not separated from “Lombok” (lumbuq, means right path) in almost all of its contexts to compose the most important phrase in Sasak people’s view of life namely “Sasak Lombok” that means “the only one right path” that similar to the concept of tawhid or as-shirâth al-mustaqîm in Islamic teaching.

This view of life corresponds to the spiritual, geographical, and ecological landscape of Lombok Island where the mount of Rinjani is perceived by Sasak ancestors not only as of the highest place on the island but as their highest spiritual achievement. In Sasak folklore, they perpetuated it in the proverb “sasaka purwa wisesa”. Sasaka means to point out; purwa means spot, and wisesa means the glory

of God. It could be said then that if you want to experience the glory of God, you should come to the top spot of the mount of Rinjani. Maulana Sheikh Zainuddin Abdul Majid, one of the most prominent spiritual leaders of the Sasak people, once said:

lanjeng kekah gunung rinjani	:	It's verily strong the mount of Rinjani
leq gumi sasak saq kodeq gati	:	In Sasak land that portrais tiny
lamun mule pade demen mengkaji	:	If you like to take a look deeply
jaq te pade sujud seribu kali	:	One thousand times, you'll be aware the God's glory

Sasak ancestors named The Almighty God “neneq kaji saq kuase” which means “I am owned by the most powerful One”. It means that there was a full awareness among them that the most powerful, God, is one. Lalu Anggawa Nuraksi, a prominent Lombok culture expert noted a genealogical track of them in what so-called panca awit pinajaran Sasak, five basic principles of Sasak people’s life. Those five basic principles are: 1) Sasak people should be submissive to the will of the one and most powerful God; 2) Given tradition to arrange a right life far before the coming of religion; 3) religion that comes with faith, rule, and moral code through the messengers of God; 4) culture as living initiatives in Sasak people’s mind and heart that derivated from tradition and religion; 5) manner codes to complete the four principles before as an integral principle of life. Nuraksi then said confidently that Sasak ancestors had been never falling into worshipping idols as part of their belief system.

It was archeologically proved that early ancestors of the Sasak people had been inhabited Lombok island in the bronze age around 1800 BCE, and experienced a high level of civilization in the tenth century based on a finding of archeological excavation like ceramics and household wares of those used by the Tang Dynasty of China, and globally well known because of the huge catastrophic eruption of Samalas mount in 1257 that affected not only Lombok and neighboring islands but also Europe and other parts of the world. Franck Lavigne suggested the high vulnerability, adaptation, and resilience of the past society of Lombok in facing such volcanic hazards caused by a large-magnitude explosive eruption.

The eruption of Samalas thus became a turning point in Sasak Lombok history. There was a missing link in Sasak history before and after the huge eruption. The majority of historical documents refer to those produced after the eruption especially in the age of Hindus-Majapahit and the Islamization of Sasak people after that. This is what explains relatively one version of mainstream Sasak Lombok historical narrative because of its printed-written sources. Meanwhile, the other possibilities of explanation as another historical narrative by considering oral and unwritten sources remain rare and excluded.

Based extensively on this oral source, Anggawa Nuraksi believes that Sasak society had been established far before the eruption of Samalas. They owned a belief system called *Wetu Telu* which means preserving harmony among three entities: God, human beings, and nature. Islam entered Lombok in the 13<sup>th</sup> century brought by Seikh Gaos Abdurrazzaq directly from Bagdad of the Arabian Peninsula. Majapahit's mission firstly came to the island in 1357 not to conquer Lombok but to study the constitution of Selaparang kingdom named "Kotaragama" that became the source of "Negarakertagama" of Majapahit composed by Mpu Prapanca. Before the Majapahit mission went back to Java, an agreement had been signed in one place named Punang in East Lombok stating that Majapahit and Selaparang will cooperate in the development, intellectual exchange, and inviting each other to attend official ceremonies in the two kingdoms.

In line with this historical narrative, Dr. Muhammad Fadjri, lecturer at Mataram University who obtained his doctoral title on Lombok history from Gajah Mada University, concluded that the Sasak people had been embracing Islam in the XIII century before the coming of the Majapahit expedition into Lombok. These people were identified as *perwangse dengan jamaq* (proto Sasak, native inhabitants of Lombok) in contrast with later immigrants to Lombok called *bangsawan kawule* who came from Java and Makassar and Islamized by Sunan Prapen in the XVI century. In Sasak dialect and before Sunan Prapen, Lombok people's *syahadat* words were "Syaduu Elaqa Ullle Haillule Edaq Iya Muhamad Rasulle" and later transformed correctly to its Arabic-Islamic origin "Asyhadu Alla Ilaha Illa Allah wa Asyhadu Anna Muhammadan Rasulullah" and spread among Sasak people. The other evidence of this conclusion is the existence of *Kitab Sulut* and 9 ancient mosques in Lombok.

This conclusion is made by Fadjri based on deep historical research through the deconstruction paradigm, a mixture of hermeneutic and genealogical methods, and the intention to criticize mainstream results of studies made by non-Sasak researchers to make Sasak people submissive to the ideological and colonial intention of outsider powers. I intentionally chose this kind of con-mainstream study to rewrite the Sasak people's history by Sasak intellectuals themselves without missing the same level of scientific validity.

The biggest gap in the history of the Sasak people is lacking written-manuscript documents. The wealth-glorious of their past remains laid on the oral tradition which is getting disappearing regarding the death of historical witnesses and sources. Therefore, as recommended by Mohamed Abel el-Jabiri in the case of Arab-Islam history, Sasak intellectuals need to unite their resources to reconstruct Sasak Lombok history by their own efforts to avoid the infiltrations of outsider-colonial interests to make Sasak people remain weak, submissive, inferior, and fractioned. In this context, what has been done by Muhammad Fadjri as mentioned before could be a sample and starting point to realize such big work.

### **Three Milestones of Islam Sasak:**

### **The Dynamic and Preservation of Moderate Values**

According to Yunnan theory on the origin of Indonesian people, Sasak people were descendants of Proto Melayu who came to the archipelago around 2000 to 1500 years BCE. They were also called Proto Sasak or—in the local language—“Sasak laeq”. Deutro Sasak came later. They consisted of various origins: Java, Bugis, Banjar, Arab, and others. Arzaki predicted that the second wave of migration had taken place since the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The mixture of Proto and Deutro Sasak then constructed the special character of Sasak Lombok’s ancestors. They had been used to practice multicultural and coexistence peaceful life.

In line with this finding, indigenous Sasak which is called “perwangse dengan jamaq” and already became Muslim around the 13<sup>th</sup> century as mentioned before experienced a kind of internal harmony and compatibility between their inherited beliefs and the teaching of Islam. Why?. Because Islam, as taught to them, was Islam through the Sufism approach; Islam that guides the tradition and local wisdom; and Islam with huge patience and great relief in doing what so-called “tazkiyah” in Sufism Islam terminology. This was the first milestone of Islam Sasak.

Taking the big picture into account, Husain Mu’nis, a prominent Muslim historian, noted that Arab-Muslim traders had built trade centers on the western coast of Sumatra in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century or early 3<sup>rd</sup> of Hegira/6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> CE. Over there, in Samudera, archaeologists found the grave of a Muslim that is estimated back to 670 CE (60 H). They were the real preacher of Islam. They posed Islam in values and noble attitudes rather than formalistic approaches. They spread from Samudera to almost all islands of the archipelago. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Islam had been established in Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, Lombok, and Maluku. “The preachers of Islam had been entitled (by local inhabitants) as-sâdah, al-asyrâf or al-awliyâ’”. Some of them were affiliated to âl al-bait (the family of Prophet Muhammad SAW)”. Martin van Bruinessen as quoted by some researchers concluded that the Sufism approach to spread Islam was one of the main factors in accelerating local inhabitants conversion to Islam.

Sasak people shared the same socio-religious collective memory of the awliyâ’ (those devoted to Allah), their roles, and wisdom in preaching Islam in Lombok. Embodying Islam in the Sasak tradition and way of life of the Sasak people was one of the biggest roles and legacy of those awliyâ’. Islam has been planted in every detail of Sasak people’s traditional life, worldview, and character. Space arrangement for example. Sasak people have a unique concept of space called paèr where the mosque is always placed as a center of domicile (inen paèr) to perform religious and cultural activities from the smallest unit to the biggest one. Furthermore, The Mount of Rinjani is treated as the top place in the paèr concept. The other example is the existence of a merit system government that is ruled by the king called Datu; the king without a throne, palace, and glory title. The Datu stand equal with the ordinary people.

It is widely acknowledged by researchers that Islam came to Lombok in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century through two roads: Java and Makassar. This

was the beginning of the Sasak people's contact with outsider powers in terms of politics and power struggles. Meanwhile, Sasak people's social and cultural relations with Java had been established far before that. In 1334, the Majapahit Regent Gajah Mada visited the Selaparang Kingdom in east Lombok and Pejanggik Kingdom in central Lombok. It can be assured that the visit had been followed by other expeditions and missions including those held by early Javanese preachers of Islam in Lombok. Historical documents and Sasak oral tradition show that Majapahit left a deep and wide influence on Sasak people's religious experience, especially in the nuance of esoteric practices.

In 1637, Selaparang Kingdom established cooperation with the Islamic Makassarese Kingdom that brought a formal-syâriah approach to Islam, especially in the east part of Lombok. Meanwhile, the west part of Lombok had been dominated by the Gelgel Kingdom of Bali since the XI century and drove the Makassarese out of East Lombok to Sumbawa. In 1740, Gelgel Kingdom had been conquered by the Kingdom of Karangasem which ruled Lombok for over two centuries after that. The Sasak people's contact with Syâriah Islam put them in a new milestone and another religious experience.

The penetration of this approach became more excessive and fruitful in transforming Sasak people into par excellent Muslims by the rise of Tuan Guru, "the pivotal religious, social, and political leader of Muslim Sasak people", starting from the XVIII century. The most influential of them, for example, are Tuan Guru Umar Buntimbe (the mid of XVIII century), Tuan Guru Umar Kelayu (1851-1930), Tuan Guru Shaleh Hambali Bengkel (1896-1968) and Tuan Guru Zainuddin Abdul Majid (1908-1997). They have been studying Islam directly in Hijaz (Mecca and Medina of current Saudi Arabia) for a quite long time before taking the role as Sasak people educator, spiritual leader, and commander of resistance movements against Mataram-Karangasem Kingdom and Dutch colonial forces.

Two pillars of Sasak people's identity, Islam and tradition, were experiencing important dialectics and dynamics in this period. Sasak nobleman who were conventionally representing Sasak tradition had been absorbed by the colonial power. Sasak people's resistance were led by Tuan Guru. In this context, the majority of Sasak people have been shifting to be more islamized in terms of theology, syariah, and social landscape. Pilgrimage to Makkah, the development of mosques, and madrasahs were growing fastly. The Sasak tradition was verified by the basic and clear-cut imperatives of normative Islamic teachings. What so-called syncretic Islam and its loyal adherents pulled out to the peripheral region of the island as in the highland area of Bayan, Mareje mount, and so on.

In this milestone, moderate characteristics of the Sasak people's traditional values meet the wide range of tolerance in Islamic syariah. Islam and tradition can live side by side with almost no tension in the social landscape of Sasak Lombok society. The syariah has a sort of elasticity to accommodate tradition without missing conformity with Islam on one hand and the values of tradition on the other. The two

elements appear clearly in almost all practices of pivotal ceremonies in Sasak people's socio-religious life like Mauludan, Nuzul al-Qur'an, Isra' Mi'raj, ngurisan, khitanan, marriage, tahlilan, zikiran, etc. This character has been embodied continuously in their pattern of practicing Islam.

All stakeholders either in the state or civil society domain are engaged in strengthening this kind of religious practice. They are supporting each other to guard the moderate characters of Sasak people in dealing with the threat of transnational ideologies as promoted, for example, by Salafi-Wahabi, Hizb at-Tahrir, Jama'ah at-Tablig, etc. These trans-national ideologies undeniably has been entered Lombok since the late the XX century and has been expanded excessively over the last two decades.

Back to the current historical context of moderate Islam discourse as mentioned at the beginning of this article, these trans-national ideologies caused instabilities, insecurities, disharmonies, resistance, and conflicts all over the world. The ideological approach to Islam, claiming the only truth, blaming others, and potential use of violent acts are among their basic characteristics. And as the result, the clashes frequently explode here or there. Sasak people's social landscape is not excluded from this phenomenon. Their moderate character is not compatible with those ideologies.

Saparudin noted that from 2004 to 2015 there were 12 physical conflicts occurred between Salafi followers and mainstream groups. The newest one was the explosion of wide mass demonstrations in Selong and Mataram which has been triggered by the statement of Salafis preacher, Mizan Qudsiyah, a senior teacher in As-Sunnah, the biggest Salafis pesantren is East Lombok, which blamed the tradition of *ziarah kubur* (visiting the saints graves) and insulted Sasak people's belief to the *keramat* (privileges from God) of those *awliya'*. Sasak people live in high tension and potential conflict with the simultaneous penetration of those transnational ideologies landslide Lombok.

### **Being Sasaknese is Being a Moderate Muslim**

Being an ordinary man is the common generic character of Sasak people. They call it "jamaq-jamaq" or "semaiq-maiq", a mental position that makes them intentionally choose the middle path and simplicity in all aspects of life. The traditional music of gamelan Sasak, for example, lies between Javanese gamelan with a slow tempo and Balinese with the fast one. The traditional house of the Sasak people is designed in simplicity and harmony with nature. Its materials are taken selectively from the surrounding forest like wood, bamboo, reed, etc. Every part of the house is fulfilled by the values and worldview of Sasak people like harmony, sincerity, simplicity, social cohesion, etc

The various origins mixture of Sasak people's ancestors make them experience multicultural life from the very beginning of their history as reflected in Sasak proverb; *rapah* (peace), *rema* (loving each other), and *règèn* (live in social order). They avoid conflict as much as possible. They have no ambition on politics



and engaging in political struggle. Rather than an intention to control others, Sasak people commonly prefer to make an inward-looking to make selves-improvement. "Menge tao peririq diri" is the goal of education in Sasak people's worldview. Menge means smart. Tao means capable. Peririq diri means self-improvement. Typical Sasaknese parents will be very happy in looking their children have good capability to improve their-selves before being improved by the others.

The peririq or meririq movement in Sasak culture is a simultaneous evolutionary movement fulfilled by the values of introspection, tolerance, merit system process, social care, cooperation, and willingness to be the best at least for oneself before being presented to the wider circle. This is what explains the concept of kedatuan (kingdom) without palaces, thrones and crowns in Sasak history. That's how the Sasak people treat their Datu (government leader) and Tuan Guru (religious leader). The Datu and Tuan Guru must be socially selected people who have the knowledge, charisma, achievement and the highest level of spirituality from the society they lead. Historically, this social law has acted like a natural law that continues to monitor the leaders to keep their honor from being thrown away and fall in front of their people's eyes.

This social law has been integrated with the Sasak people's belief system which consists of three layers of values: tindih at the first as a philosophical value, maliq at the second as a moral pillar, and merang at the third as the ruling norm. Tindih means a persistence to guard the truth at all costs. This value is derived from tawhid which Muslim Sasak people believed in. Maliq is similar to taboo, a red line that is strongly forbidden to be exceeded. Its function is to create a moral state in Sasak people's minds and attitudes to not doing certain things that potentially will bring a very bad impact either personally or collectively, real or magical. Merang means a strong intention to do a good thing and positive contribution to preserving social solidarity and harmony. What so-called Krame or Awig-awig, traditional rules which obeyed by Sasak people, is derived from this third layer of value.

That is the common platform of being Sasaknese. Genealogically, being Sasaknese means being connected and affiliated to the values, characters and attitudes of believing in tawhid, straightforward in the middle path of life, living in harmony with nature and human beings, maintaining social cohesion in a multicultural society, and deriving all of these values in the norms and rules that regulate their everyday lives. By considering the traditional values of the Sasak people, when some researchers said that being Sasaknese is being Muslim, I argue that "being Sasaknese is being moderate Muslim". Why? Because all pillars of moderate Islam were found in Sasak people's common worldview and religious practice.

"We are all santri", said Tuan Guru Abdul Hamid Faisal, a prominent tuan guru, to describe the profile of Sasak people in Lombok. Kingsley commented that it would be naive to interpret the assertion as self-serving because the reality in Lombok corresponded to the assessment. As approved by many researchers, santri is the backbone of Indonesia's moderate Islam. Pesantren (where santri is being

educated) along the history of the archipelago has been taking role of the anchor of peace, tolerance, stability, and sustainability of modern Indonesia as an integrated nation-state. And Sasak Lombok is not excluded from this panorama.

Prof. Saiful Muslim, chief of the Indonesian Ulema Council of West Nusa Tenggara, confirmed that the Sasak people could not be separated from their *tuan guru*. They always put the *tuan guru* in the first place in their preferences. They will not perform any religious ceremonies in their important moments of life called *rowah* without the presence of the *tuan guru*. At every detail of their hajj journey, they will take the guidance of the *tuan guru* as the priority to do or not do. Historically speaking, the biggest wish of Sasak parents is to see their children become *tuan gurus* in their future. So that, soon after graduating from elementary school, they used to send them to *pesantren* which is called in the Sasak language “*mondok*”. It could be said then that the portrait of Sasak people is laying on the profile of their *tuan guru*. And it is scientifically proved that the network of *tuan guru* in the context of the Sasak people connected with *Ahl As-Sunnah wa Al-Jamâ’ah* which is identified as moderate Muslim of Nusantara.

Based on this fact, describing Lombok merely by its landscape as the island of thousands of mosques is not sufficient anymore. It has to be added by the fact that almost all of Sasak people are moderate Muslims who could be identified as friendly to local tradition, tolerant of other religions adherents, strong denial to use of violence in preaching Islam, and historically proven to be die harders in guarding nation against colonial forces. All of these qualities are the main indicators of moderate Islam as promoted and mainstreamed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Unfortunately, the top-down approach which is taken by the government does not address the issue properly. By taking the living phenomenon of Sasak people society as conventionally religious moderate practicer, the most important role to be taken should be participatory actions within the bottom-up approach. The first approach is frequently manifested in formal-ceremonial appearances. The nuance of engineered realities could be found relatively easy and perceived as the projects of government which anytime can be up and down. Meanwhile, the last approach require a real need for diverse elements of Lombok society to be facilitated based on their judgment and consideration.

### **The Practices of Moderate Islam in Sasak People’s Cycle of Life**

This long historical and civilizational process has been forming Islam not only as the Sasak people’s marker of identity but also a religious moderation pattern of life. This identity and pattern are deeply rooted in their history, culture, and knowledge system which are treated as a common reference to produce any concepts and practices. André Lalande, a prominent contemporary France philosopher, named it “*la raison constituée*” which is arabized by Mohamed Abed el-Jabri as “*al-‘aql al-mukawwan*”. Therefore, the penetration of any different kind of reference will not be shifting Sasak people’s practices of Islam from a moderate position to the right or the left.

The socio-religious common ground of the Sasak people is one of the most conclusive evidence. It is relatively easy to find out whether certain social phenomena existed in Sasak people's social landscape as a borrowed-imported or originally-inherited phenomenon. Caste-closed system of Sasak nobility, for example, is seemingly borrowed from the Mataram-Karangasem kingdom which had been ruling Lombok from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Contemporary penetration of transnational ideologies such as Salafi-Wahabi, Jam'âah at-Tablîg, Hizb at-Tahrîr, and so on is also existing in Lombok as a temporal, limited, and imported phenomenon. Sasak people as a whole might be influenced in certain times and places by this kind of borrowed-imported socio-religious references but not every time and every place.

As stated in Qur'ân, "fa ammâ az-zabâdu fa yazhabu jufâan, wa ammâ mâ yanfa' an-nâs fa yamkutsu fi al-ardh", Sasak people practice moderate Islam in the same breath-taking as what they have inherited from their former generations and proved useful in their daily lives. They remain practicing "lombok mirah sasak adhi" as a way of life. This philosophical core value is connecting all traditional values of the Sasak people and directs them to take the middle straight path: a sincere, honest, simple, and ordinary way of life. Nowadays, the typical Sasaknese remains a man or woman with a strong belief in destiny, no ambition for political struggle, living as farmers in the villages or fishers on the coasts, preserving the unity of every own family in the extended family system, and connecting spiritually to the ancestors.

They commemorate almost every moment of life by what so-called "rowah" or "zikir": in planting rice, building house, shaving baby's hair, wedding ritual, passing away, etc. They also perform rowah at every special moment of Islam: Maulid Nabi, Isra' Mi'raj, welcoming Ramadhan month, Nuzul al-Qur'an, Ied al-Fithr, Ied al-Adhha, etc. In the special moments after Ramadhan, Sasak people commemorate not only lebaran Ied al-Fithr but also what so-called lebaran topat which is taken place at the day after completing six days of sunnah fasting of Syawwal. This lebaran is often festivalized in big rowah and pilgrimage to the graves of awliya' Allah like Batu Layar grave in the West Lombok, Loang Baloq in Mataram, Makam Ketaq in Central Lombok, and other respected saints graves. Rowah has become a monument where Islam and tradition meet perfectly in the Sasak people's religious experience.

They practice Islam within the consideration of the local requirements possibilities. They love Islam as much as their homeland. So that, they react negatively to any intention to contradict religion vis a vis tradition. More than that, they have proved resistance to any outsider powers that will invade Lombok. They take all costs to guard their homeland against any colonial power. The historical rise of tuan guru is directly connected to this issue. The legendary war of Congah Praya 1891 against Karangasem kingdom was led by Guru Bangkol, the loyal follower of At-Thariqah An-Naqsyabandiyah under direct command of his master: Tuan Guru Ali Batu, Sakra of East Lombok. The resistance against Dutch colonial force was also connected to the movements of Muslims Sasak under the commands of tuan gurus. They were taught by their early Tuan Guru like Tuan Guru Umar Kelayu of

East Lombok and his disciples across the island that the resistance against colonial power is *jihād fi sabilillah* which means struggling at all costs to gain freedom from colonialism.

As every moderate Muslim knows, *jihād fi sabilillah* is a defense mechanism of the Muslim community against colonial-invading forces and the only legal way of using violence in the perspective of Islamic *syar'ah*. In this meaning, it is only used in the context of war and emergencies. In the normal situation, Sasak people are well known as the believers in peace, harmony, and co-existence in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society like what is actually happening in Lombok. Sasak Muslims shared the public sphere with their counterpart of Hindus in performing religious rituals like the *ogoh-ogoh* festival on the day before *Nyepi* or the *perang topat* ritual in Lingsar of West Lombok. They also welcomed the contributions of their Chinese counterparts at the 26<sup>th</sup> national competition of *qur'an* recitation (MTQ-Musâbaqah *Tilâwah al-Qur'ân*) in Mataram, 2016, which lightened the main road of *Pejanggik* around the place of MTQ by thousands of colorful lanterns.

This is not a new or fabricated reality. TGH. Turmudzi Badaruddin, one of the most influential current *tuan guru* in Lombok, showed a similar story from the past. He said that some funders of his master: *Tuan Guru Saleh Hambali* (1896-1968) in building *Pesantren Darul Qur'an* were Hindus. Quoting his master, *Tuan Guru Turmudzi* recited a wisdom passage, "*layu'ayyidu hâdzâ ad-dîn bi ar-rajul al-fâjir*" which means "sometimes, Allah will support Islam by the not good person". He further explained that his master used tolerance and elasticity in building good relationship with other religious adherents, opening good communication and interaction with them, letting them internalize the beauty of Islamic wisdom naturally, and praying for them to get into the guidance of Allah to the ultimate truth.

*Tuan Guru Muharrar Mahfudz*, a big *tuan guru* and the recent leader of *Pesantren Nurul Hakim* of Kediri in West Lombok, added that the internalization of that model of educating Islam had been creating the peaceful manner of Sasak people in their social interaction. "there will never be a physical clash in polite language, isn't that?", he questioned to describe that polite mind and language which had been transmitted from those honored *tuan gurus*. He also shared the feeling of not using Sasak language in his public speech if he was not assured that the language he used was polite Sasak language.

This kind of wisdom requires a deep and wide understanding of Islamic teachings. Practicing moderate Islam will not be possible without such understanding. A moderate path never means a comfort zone or a way to escape from any risks and turbulencies. Walking on the moderate way of practicing Islam means guarding *tawassuth* (being in the golden middle path), *tasâmuh* (tolerance), *tawâzun* (proportional), and *i'tidâl* (fairness). It is like a straightway on the top of the hill which is threaten by the dark and dangerous ways on the right and the left. That is the nature of *as-shirât al-mustaqîm* which is translated to the local wisdom of Sasak people into "*lombok mirah sasak adhi*" as portrayed before in this article.

## **Conclusion**

The Sasak people have gone through the many stages of their religious experience and they have emerged from it as Muslims who are committed to their Islam. This is not surprising if we look at the nature of the belief of their ancestors which are compatible with monotheism. Therefore, when Islam entered the island of Lombok, they voluntarily entered the religion. They build their lives on the two pillars of Islam and local traditions.

Then came to them beliefs and ideologies that did not coincide with the traditions on which they depend either from inside or outside Islam. But they remain steadfast in defending the belief system with which their lives were inextricably linked under the leadership of Tuan Guru. So far, they are characterized by moderation, tolerance, balance, and moderation. Then they build their lives according to the standards of patriotism and love of traditions, not allowing violence and peaceful coexistence with adherents of other religions who live with them in the society.

So, it could be said genealogically that to be Sasaknese is to be a moderate Muslim. Further research is required to strengthen the moderate characteristics of Sasak people's religious understandings and practices to prevent any violent actions in the name of Islam. The government strategy should be shifting from top-down to bottom-up strategy especially to open more natural public spaces for different religions of Lombok which were existed to strengthen the sincere and healthy relations among the people regardless of their religious and cultural affiliations.

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